Dr. *PARKER'S*

SERMON

Preached before the HONOURABLE

HOUSE of COMMONS.

Martis, 1 *Die Februarii*, 1757.

ORDERED, That the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Reverend Doctor *Parker*, for the Sermon by him preached before this Houſe at *St. Margaret's*, *Weſtminſter*; and that he be deſired to print the ſame; and that Mr. *Olmius* and Mr. *Probyn* do acquaint him therewith.

J. DYSON,
Cl. Dom. Com.

A

SERMON

Preached before the HONOURABLE

HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT

St. Margaret's, Weſtminſter.

On *Monday*, *January* 31, 1757.

Being appointed to be obſerved as the day of the Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

By WILLIAM PARKER, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY,
and F. R. S.

The SECOND EDITION.

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PROVERBS xvii. 14.

The beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water.

WE are called together this day into the houſe of God, by national authority, to recollect, and lament the miſeries once introduced into this kingdom by the outrages of publick licentiouſneſs. And we cannot too often, or too earneſtly inculcate loyalty, and regular ſubmiſſion to laws, upon a licentious age and people. This is the important leſſon of the day; and hiſtory, and lamentable experience inforce the inference.

NOT indeed as a leſſon, or argument of admonition to be inculcated by me on this grand council of national deliberation, before whom

whom I have the honour to be called this day to ſpeak: ſuch inculcation might be deemed uſeleſs and impertinent. The judgment, wiſdom, and equity of it's members, will make general harmony therein preſumed; as far as harmony is conſiſtent with free deliberation: eſpecially while the approved experience, integrity, knowledge, and impartiality, which have ſo long been ſeated, with univerſal ſatisfaction, in the chair of the council, ſhall continue to preſide, and protect the orders of harmony. The end and object will naturally be one and the ſame with all, who have great property to maintain in publick ſafety; however different their ſentiments may be about the means.

But exhortations to unanimity can never be unſeaſonable to free nations; to ſtates, that groan not under the fetters of abſolute, uncontrolable power. National deliberation ſuppoſes occaſional debate among perſonages of liberal minds. Maſters of rhetorick therefore of old, well-wiſhers to ſociety, have delivered rules for the conduct of debate in ſuch deliberative aſſemblies. For debate does not always, as hath ſometimes been improperly interpreted, imply divulſions of affection.

There

There is great difference between debate, and ſtrife; as between wiſdom and folly. Debate may be carried on with zeal, and earneſtneſs of ſpirit, yet at the ſame time with ſocial amity of heart. For true debate is nothing more than invigorated converſation upon matters of weight and importance. Whereas ſtrife is noiſe without deliberation, or diſcretion; and is endleſs in the miſchiefs it produces.

SOLOMON, as a wiſe king, and a preacher, according to the character of king and prieſt in ancient days united, who had well obſerved mankind, and formed many experimental remarks upon the effects of human paſſions, delivers this obſervation among others to his people, as a ſtanding memorial, and admonition to be regarded in ſubſequent ages, that *the beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water*. When the mighty torrent is once permitted to break it's boundaries, we know not how far it may extend itſelf, or what deſtruction it may ſpread: we know not where to ſtop, or how to recal it within it's channel again. So when the outragious multitude of an incenſed people break the boundaries of law, the torrent ruſheth forth with uncontrolable violence; confuſion overſpreads the land;

land; tide riſeth upon tide; and ſwelling wave oppreſſeth wave; the fruit of the country is deſtroyed before them, the full grown crop, and the ſhooting ear, and the riſing plant together; and the whole land is laid deſolate.

THE unhappy cataſtrophe of this day, and the many ſcenes of deſolation, which preceded and enſued it, do but too far juſtify the remark. A comprehenſive hiſtory of the tranſactions that led thereunto, and attended it, is handed down to us: the *roll* thereof, according to the language of the prophet, is written as it were *within, and without:* the book is full and copious: *and there is written therein lamentation, and mourning, and woe.*

MANY remarks and inferences croud in upon us from the hiſtory of thoſe unhappy times, relative to all orders of men. I ſhall beg leave to inſtance in ſome few, which moſt naturally occur, that they may juſtify the original inſtitution of the day, and render the preſent application of it truly uſeful and religious.

FOR the right buſineſs of the day is not to enhance or exaggerate the characters of the principal actors in thoſe unhappy times, which will

will only tend to exaſperate opponents: but to form reſolutions of avoiding rebellious examples, and licentious principles. If to rail were the ſole end of our meeting together on this day, it might be ſaid to us, as was once ſaid to the Corinthians by St. Paul; *in this, my brethren, I praiſe you not, that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worſe.* But we, it is to be hoped, have made a right uſe of the day already in our devotions, and have met together *for the better*, in our moral, and religious reflections.

And here one of the firſt reflections naturally recurring to your minds, for your minds will go before me in every thing, that I can this day pretend to offer; one of the firſt reflections recurring from the hiſtory of the day, and ſuggeſted in the text, will be this; that men cannot foreſee, how far ſtrife may carry them, when once they indiſcretely engage in the ſervices of contention. Many of thoſe who ſet out in legal oppoſition to abuſed prerogative at firſt, were hurried, either by precipitancy of paſſion, violence of natural temper, or at laſt by the exigencies of private, perſonal ſafety, through various degrees of litigation and conteſt, into meaſures, which at firſt would have ſtartled their unfeared conſciences: and their temerity

unluckily made way for conſciences worſe than their own, and feared from the beginning of the tumult, to commit actions, which their own heart, even in its moſt exaſperated ſtate, could not have been induced to perpetrate.

INCROACHMENTS upon liberty had at firſt certainly been made by ſtrained prerogative. Incroachments upon prerogative were in return made by licentiouſneſs. The former would provoke the people: the latter would naturally incenſe the king. They met together with angry ſpirits: they parted in rage and fury. Altercations ſerved only to blow up the coals of reſentment. At length the flame burſt forth into open outrage. Lawleſs violations of prerogative ſoon enſued; and the progreſs, and the ſtrides were haſty from unbridled civil ſtrife into rebellion, from rebellion into anarchy and total confuſion.

HENCE therefore princes may learn a caution, how they begin to ſtretch prerogative againſt law. Subjects ſhould learn a caution, how they begin to tranſgreſs law in oppoſition to prerogative. Both ſides were, either by their own paſſions, or the ſubtle management of artful deſigning men, carried further, than they could at firſt have poſſibly preconceived: both

both were ſufferers in the conſequences of their own trangreſſions; and the reſult was publick calamity.

ALL the preceding ſteps, which on either ſide led the way to the fatal ſlaughter of this day, had been miſeries deplored on both ſides at the time of their origin, within many breaſts of true-grounded allegiance; as they were omens of greater ſucceeding miſeries. Miſeries not only felt by the innocent, inactive members of the body; but by many ſoon of the guilty inſtruments on both ſides, and firſt agents themſelves: pointed with this additional aggravation of woe, the ſtings of a guilty conſciouſneſs, that they had unwarily paved the road to bring down this deſtruction upon their own heads. The ſupreme powers of the commonwealth were violently convulſed; and when *the whole head was ſick*, it was natural, *that the whole heart ſhould ſoon be faint.*

YOUR minds then will next be led, as often as this day revolves, to take a ſhort review of the miſeries, in which our fore-fathers by their unguarded quarrels, and licentiouſneſs, precipitately involved themſelves. A picture indeed of all the diſtreſſes that attended, would here be horrid; and is rather to be left, as it is drawn from

the records of thoſe times, upon the tablet of your memory, than to be deſcribed in words. The perſons who firſt led on the van of troubles, as I have already obſerved, were ſome of the firſt and greateſt ſufferers therein. The diſtreſſes of the king, his impriſonment, and death, were to many but *the beginning of ſorrows.*

As to the king, his conduct was illuſtrious in tribulation; and uſeful examples of patience, and devout reſignation, might be drawn from the remembrance. The character of the king was never greater upon the throne, than it appeared upon the ſcaffold. He had been habitually upright and religious in private life: his piety was able to ſupport him under his load of afflictions: and his dignity in ſuffering was triumphant. So that the day of his death was to him, as it were the day of his victory: he triumphed over his enemies in eſcaping them; and over himſelf in forgiving them.

But I draw a veil over that, which moſt diſgraces our country! The deed is painted in your minds already! The uſe of annually looking back upon ſuch landſkips of miſery is, that men by viewing the conſequences of ſe-

dition may learn to abhor, and guard againſt future rebellion.

As to the nation, it had been notoriouſly and confeſſedly wicked: perhaps not the leaſt part of its wickedneſs, nor the leaſt miſchievous, was that, which conſiſted in its diſſimulation. But it ſeemed every way prepared to draw down vengeance upon itſelf: and the viſitation lighted on the moſt tender, and moſt affecting part of its conſtitution. The body ſocial deſerved puniſhment, and the viſitation fell upon the head. The ſins of a licentious people called down judgment upon them; and the effect of their rebellion againſt their king was their puniſhment. For in a natural way it introduced all the diſorders of anarchy above deſcribed, and the miſeries conſequent thereupon. Vice indeed and irreligion, however covered under pretences of piety, have a natural tendency to contempt of government and to anarchy. For an habitual diſregard or tranſgreſſion of divine laws, will render men leſs inclined to comply with the inſtitutions of human authority.

HENCE therefore we may proceed to draw ſome few particular inferences ſuitable to the day, and uſeful to the publick body.

AND

And firſt we may learn, let ſenſualiſts urge what they pleaſe, that the regular reſtraints of law are the ſupport of liberty. When laws begin openly to be trangreſſed without remorſe, whether by prerogative, or popular inſurrection, liberty in proportion declines of courſe. Reſtraint and liberty may ſeem indeed to be words of contradiction. But law and liberty are not ſo inconſiſtent with each other, as at firſt ſight they may appear. Some reſtraints upon natural liberty will be the ſecurities of moral and civil freedom. Laws of polity were in a great meaſure ordained to preſerve men free: that is, free to chuſe, and execute, what is right and fitting for their nature. For where would be my liberty of action, if every neighbour that ſurrounds me were every day ready, and able with impunity, and without coercion, to impede my choice, or obſtruct the execution of my choice in acting? Or where would be the freedom of my neighbour, if he were in the like manner expoſed to incurſions from me, to the impediments of my hands, in all his undertakings, and the dread of my arm ready to fall every day upon him? The ſame reſtrictions therefore upon *him*, that are neceſſary to preſerve *my* liberty, are likewiſe neceſſary upon *me*,

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to preſerve *his*. And the ſanctions and intentions of laws within ſtates muſt be impartial and univerſal.

SENSUALISTS may murmur under the reſtrictions of laws, becauſe their own irregularities may have made the yoke ſit heavy upon their necks. Which irregularities unreſtrained would ſoon have abridged the liberty of their neighbours. But both moral and civil freedom muſt be ſuch, and ſupported in ſuch manner, as is conſiſtent with the nature of the moral and civil agents themſelves. Nay in reality *all* beings, whether below, or above the degree of human agency, are under ſome kind of obligation to act and purſue what is right in the univerſal ſyſtem; ſo that they cannot well do otherwiſe, either from the imperfection, or inherent perfection of their nature. All below humanity are reſtrained within their ſpheres and orbits by a law of nature, and of natural impulſe. All above humanity are reſtrained by a perfecter law of reaſon. Man is of a mixt, and middle nature, made up of excellencies and imperfections: And ſo written laws are circumſcribed around him, only to keep him right within his ſphere; yet free within that ſphere: to keep the balance equal between his reaſon

reaſon and paſſion: to preſerve him properly a free-agent, not a ſlave to paſſion: that is, to ſecure his natural, as well as civil liberty, the liberty of his reaſon in both reſpects. And ſo law may be conſidered rather as an *aid* to reaſon, than a *reſtraint* upon reaſon. It points out and inforces that rule of rectitude, which is pointed out, and kept inviolate to ſuperior beings, by ſuperior internal faculties. If obligation to do right, or ſome kind of moral incapacity to do wrong were an impeachment of freedom, the argument might be carried further, and might extend itſelf, pardon the irreverence of the expreſſion, to the Deity himſelf, who by the very perfection of his nature, in the moſt abſolute ſenſe, *can* do *no* wrong.

LAWS then, in ſhort, are the walls, that are to keep out the inundations of the waters of ſtrife. And we may learn from hiſtory, that when theſe walls are broken down, and the ſupreme head of the law, is in the vehemence of the ſtorm beaten to the ground, liberty ſtands upon a very precarious foundation.

IN the next place, it ſhould be our endeavour to wipe off the ſtain, and the reproach brought upon the nation by the horrid execution of this day. It was a tranſaction new, and

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ſingular in its kind. We have heard of *Athenians*, that baniſhed the ſon of an uſurper; of *Lacedæmonians*, that baniſhed thirty tyrants at once; of *Romans*, that ſtabbed an uſurper in the ſenate. But this is the firſt time that we have heard of legal majeſty thus arraigned in it's own courts; of ſupreme majeſty thus formally tried, contemptuouſly treated, and condemned by ſome of the meaneſt of it's own ſubjects; of virtuous, exemplary majeſty, thus deliberately beheaded on a public ſcaffold, before it's own palace, in the face of it's own kingdom.

LET us endeavour, by our future fidelity in allegiance to obliterate this diſgrace! And let us ſtudy, even upon principles of gratitude, as well as ſecurity, to make every good king happy!

OUR commonwealth hath been once toſſed, and almoſt totally ſhipwrecked in the gulph of anarchy: God at length was pleaſed to deliver our veſſel from the ſtorm: Let us take heed how ſhe be ever torn from her anchor again!

FROM the active principles of prevailing influence, which ſtained that unhappy age, ſtates may learn to be upon their guard againſt the extremes either of *no* religion, or *too much*. For enthuſiaſm generally ſung the prelude to moſt

of the miſchiefs which were committed in it. And whenever irreligion entered upon the ſtage, hypocriſy was ready to throw over it her maſk of ſanctity.

ENTHUSIASM indeed of any kind is ever inclined to be contentious, and in the operations of ſtrife to break down thoſe boundaries, which ſhould keep out the floods of anarchy. Hypocriſy is ever ready to wear the maſk of any thing: to be either *all* religion, or *no* religion: to appear upon the ſtage, or lurk behind the curtain, as ſhall beſt ſerve her purpoſes.

THE exceſſes of religion, or it's ape, hypocriſy, in that age, were one cauſe of the great want of religion in the next. For men began to be ſo much diſpleaſed with the hypocritical devotions, and ſanctified iniquities of their fathers, that, aſhamed to wear the garb of religion, they choſe rather to throw off all religion with it. Indeed, the extravagancies of religion, whether ſuperſtition, or enthuſiaſm, have ever had too great a tendency to introduce atheiſm in their rear. For when men come once to find a religion to be without reaſon, they will be naturally inclined to think they have reaſon on their ſide to reject religion. Thus the ſame individuals have ſometimes run from one extream into another. Convinced of

their

their enthuſiaſm, or aſhamed of their former ſuperſtition, they have been induſtrious to recede as far as they could from it, and in the haſtineſs of their flight have found no medium between blind devotion, the goal from whence they ſet out, and poſitive atheiſm.

LET us be careful then, that we ſuffer not true, rational, modeſt religion to be put to the bluſh by the aſſurance of an over-ſanctified face confronting it: and that ſound religion be not undermined by falſe pretences of any head-warm zealots to more religion, than the reſt of mankind deſire or venture to aſſume.

OBSERVANT likewiſe of the pains, that popery hath ever taken to undermine our religion, and to plant its own tenets in the room; of the part it acted in thoſe days; the numberleſs emiſſaries at this time ſpread abroad in every corner of our kingdom, under different ſhapes and colours, eſpecially in this it's great metropolis, ever ready, no doubt, to ſend intelligence of our councils to the enemy, let us be zealouſly watchful againſt the incurſions of that dangerous ſuperſtition! Let the ſtate conſider, how unfriendly to princes the religion of *Rome* hath been through ages; and conſequently how precarious the allegiance of her diſciples muſt be, who can excommunicate, and teacheth

her votaries to depoſe kings, whenever ſhe pleaſeth, and fair opportunity offereth, for crimes, which ſhe calls hereſy.

ABOVE all, from the viſitations upon the age, we this day recollect, let men rivet in their minds this perſuaſion, that there is a providence preſiding over kingdoms, which can puniſh the licentiouſneſs of a nation as well in the natural product of its own wickedneſs, as ſometimes by immediate judicial interpoſitions. For the natural conſequences of outragious licentiouſneſs, of uncontroled enthuſiaſm, and crafty deſigning hypocriſy, were left to themſelves, and their own free operations, to be the puniſhment of the nation in that corrupt age. A more grievous puniſhment need not have been inflicted!

LET both kings and ſubjects learn, from the fate of that unhappy monarch, whoſe roll of misfortunes was this day ſealed up, that there is an over-ruling providence above princes. The hiſtory of thoſe times convinceth us, that, whenever it pleaſeth, it can *refrain the ſpirit of princes, and is wonderful among the kings of the earth.*

HAPPY is it for us, that we have a king now ſitting on the throne of this realm, who guides himſelf by ſuch a perſuaſion: free at the

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ſame time from ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm: who acts under ſerious principles of chriſtian proteſtant religion, as well as of ſtrict moral honour and integrity! Great reaſon have we to pray, not only on this day, but in our conſtant devotions, not only in the temple, but in the cloſet, for the long continuance of a life ſo important to the publick welfare!

I COULD ſpeak of the virtues that irradiate the crown, but that I know I cannot add warmth to your ſentiments upon this head: and I am unwilling to ſoil, what I cannot illuſtrate. I could ſpeak of the virtues transfuſed as it were through the royal blood; if your time would permit: of the praiſes, that recommend the deſcendants of the crown to our moſt ardent loyalty and affection; becauſe they add a luſtre to the great example ſet them from the throne.

BUT pardon my deficiencies! The nation wants not loyal affection, ſo great, and ſo univerſal, as even from ancient days hath ſeldom waited on the ſteps of the throne before. Your patience calls me to conclude; and I ſhall treſpaſs but in one inference, and exhortation further.

IF the preacher were indeed ſilent, the preſent condition of the times would itſelf ſpeak

aloud,

aloud, and exhort to unity. As brethren engaged in one common journey, under hazards of war, and ſcarcity of bread, we are admoniſhed by our common parent, our country, *to ſee that we fall not out by the way.*

It was once the praiſe of Jeruſalem, a ſtrength and ſtabiliment of that flouriſhing city, then eſteemed *the joy of the whole earth*, that it was *built as a city that is at unity in itſelf.* While that union of heart ſubſiſted, the city flouriſhed: that cement of affections was deſtroyed before the city fell.

Never was there a time, when unanimity among ourſelves was more neceſſary than at preſent. We have a declared and inveterate enemy endeavouring, by all the arts of ſubtle inſinuation and open violence, to undermine, reduce, and deſtroy us. A nation, whoſe determined policy it hath long been to rob us ſilently of the very mine of all our treaſures; of the fountain, that ſupplieth the very nerves of our conſtitution, and the vital juices of our common-wealth, our trade: to ſupplant us in every port, into which they themſelves can ſteal, or force an entrance. A nation, that hath been but too ſucceſsful in crafty, cunning addreſs to ſeduce from us our allies. A nation, that by open aſſault and declared war proceeds

to

to ſpoil us of our colonies, and threaten us with violence at our own doors. Againſt ſuch an enemy it is neceſſary, that we be conjoined in heart, and voice, and hand! When allies are grown unfaithful, and but few are left, let the united body become the moſt faithful ally unto itſelf! Approving at the ſame time it's fidelity and attachment to thoſe that remain: ſerious in it's deliberations: ſteady in it's reſolutions: faithful in it's leagues: frugal in it's expences: ſpeedy in it's executions: ſincerely ſuppliant to the ſupreme lord of all things under all it's motions. May every man in his private capacity purſue his own intereſt in national proſperity! Private happineſs then will ſoon flow in upon him. May every man in his ſocial capacity be ſtudious to encourage induſtry; to reward virtue; to ſeclude intemperance, idleneſs, and the whole train of habits, qualities, and vices, either unconducive, or pernicious to publick welfare, under all their colours of hypocritical pretence, from the juſt retributions due to true ſocial merit: in ſhort to denominate this common-wealth a vigilant, ſober, active people, whoſe hands are virtuouſly employed; a peaceful brotherhood, whoſe minds have little time to liſten to the voice of diſcord; a wiſe and underſtanding nation; *a generation*

that

that ſet their hearts aright; and whoſe ſpirit cleaveth ſtedfaſtly unto God!

Theſe things, if thou purſueſt with a ſincere heart, ô nation of commerce, then ſhall the ſpices of *Arabia* continue to flow in unto thee: *the abundance of the ſea ſhall be turned unto thee: thy* ſhips *ſhall come from far; they ſhall bring gold and incenſe: the glory of Lebanon ſhall come unto thee: the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together. Then ſhall* thy own land *bring forth her increaſe: and God even our own God ſhall give us his bleſſing.*

If, inſtead of ſtrife, which letteth in the waves of confuſion over kingdoms, thy conſtant aim ſhall be to ſow peace on earth, and to confirm good-will among men, inſtead of thorns, thou ſhalt gather olives; and where thiſtles grew, thou ſhalt reap the flower of wheat: Inſtead of faſting and lamentation, ſhall be joy within thy gates: and this ſhall be thy ſong and thy triumph, *The Lord of hoſts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

FINIS.

Lately publiſhed,
By the ſame AUTHOR.

I. The Nature and Reaſonableneſs of the Inward Call and Outward Miſſion to the Holy Miniſtry conſidered.

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